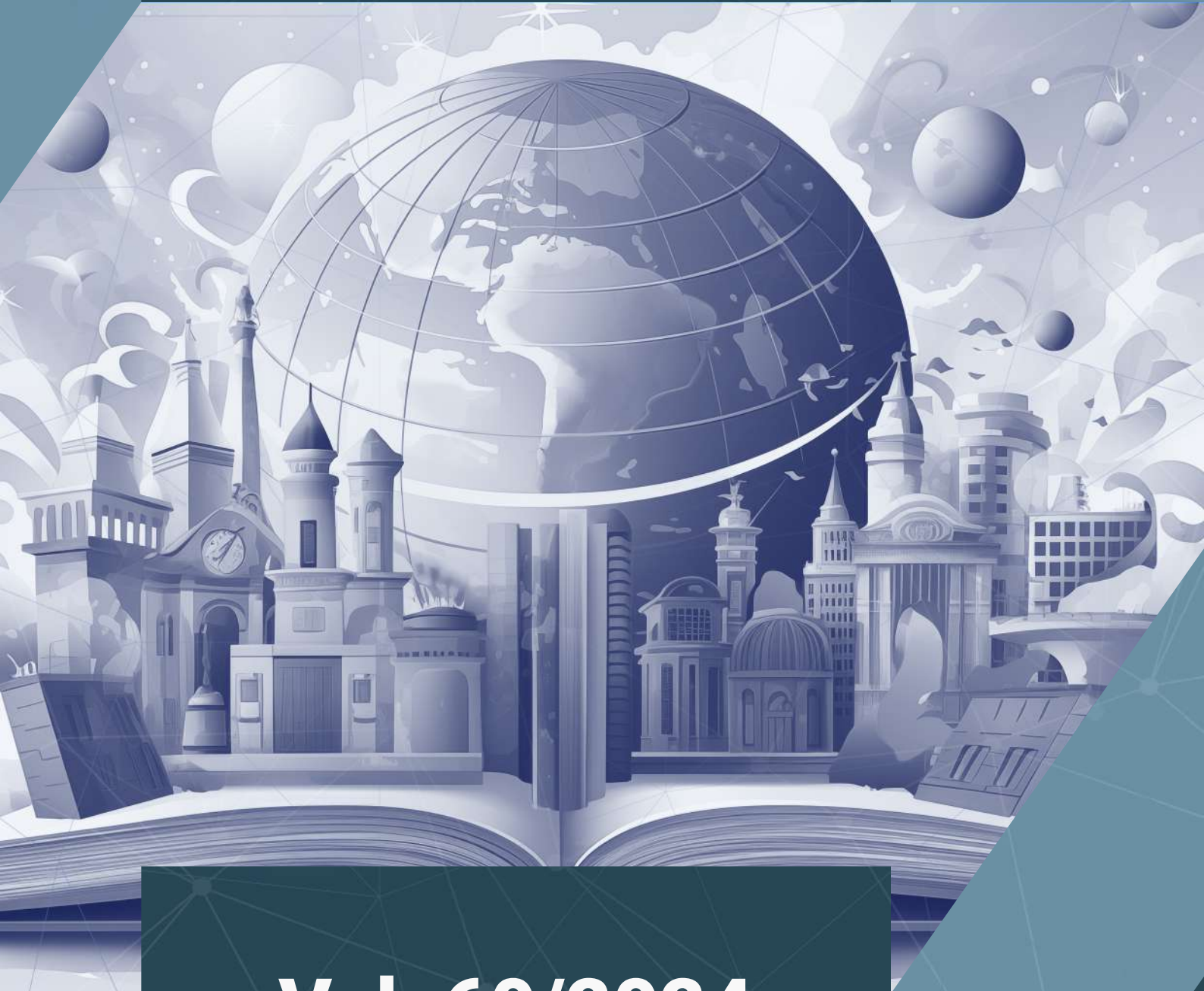




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Assessing Student Satisfaction with Selected Schools Services through the 7Ps Marketing Mix: A Study of a Catholic Higher Education Institution in the Philippines

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Abstract. Student satisfaction is a crucial indicator of educational quality, extending beyond mere comfort. Hence, this paper examined the college student satisfaction with selected school services at a Catholic institution in Southern Negros Occidental during 2023-2024 in the light of product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence relative to sex, academic program, year level, or family income. Likewise, it also investigated the significant difference in their satisfaction when grouped according to the demographics. Using the quantitative design, this was assessed by 328 college students. It employed the modified questionnaire of 7Ps marketing framework which underwent rigorous validation and reliability testing. In data analysis, it utilized mean, standard deviation, Mann Whitney U test, and Kruskal Wallis. This also adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board. Generally, the students are highly satisfied with the selected school services relative to the 7Ps. In terms of sex, there were significant differences in product, price, promotion, people, and physical evidence. In income, all 7Ps were found to have significant differences. In year level, people and process were found to have significant differences. In academic program, there were significant differences in terms of product, price, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Hence, these findings imply the importance of customizing service delivery to meet the unique needs and expectations of diverse student groups. Also, these findings collectively underscore the need for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of student satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of recognizing individual differences and addressing specific concerns to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Keywords. Student satisfaction, 7Ps marketing framework, descriptive-comparative, Catholic Higher Education Institution, Philippines

1.0 Introduction

Student satisfaction is a crucial indicator of educational quality, extending beyond mere comfort [1]. Limited funding globally hinders essential resources, extracurricular activities, and quality instruction, disproportionately impacting marginalized students [2]. Skilled teachers are essential for a positive student experience, but large workloads and limited development opportunities can hinder their effectiveness [3,4]. Meanwhile, clear

communication between students and schools is vital for addressing concerns [5]. Inflexible curriculums and overemphasizing standardized testing often neglect individual student needs [6]. This is particularly concerning in the face of a growing competitive global education landscape. Institutions in countries like India [7], Bangladesh [8], and China [9] face increasing pressure to prioritize student experiences to ensure satisfaction, retention, and overall success.

ASEAN countries demonstrate progress in student services with a focus on holistic support, technology integration, and student-centered approaches while promoting inclusive practices for accessibility [10,11,7]. However, challenges remain, such as limited funding, large student populations, a shortage of qualified staff, and cultural barriers that may discourage students from utilizing support [2,8,3]. Best practices emphasize providing academic, financial, psychological, and social services alongside technology-driven solutions, personalized attention, and addressing the needs of students with disabilities or from marginalized backgrounds [10]. These will be key in overcoming funding limitations and staffing shortages in expanding student populations. To further improve, ASEAN nations can benefit from increased collaboration and knowledge sharing to streamline policies and build capacity in delivering effective student services.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 9, series of 2013 provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing student affairs and services (SAS) in Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) [12]. It outlines programs and activities that promote student well-being, emphasizing regular assessments to gauge student expectations and satisfaction as part of quality improvement efforts. The Memorandum Order also mandates monitoring by CHED Regional Offices to ensure the effective implementation of student services, including guidance and counseling, career placement, admissions, scholarships, food, health, security, and social community involvement. It further covers student development programs fostering leadership, social responsibility, cultural awareness, and physical well-being, while providing guidelines for student organizations, activities, discipline, welfare, and services for students with disabilities. Overall, this comprehensive framework aims to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students in Philippine HEIs.

A Catholic higher educational institution located in Negros Occidental, Philippines faces challenges in implementing CHED Memorandum Order No. 9, s. 2013 due to limited resources. These institutions often struggle to maintain facilities, offer diverse extracurricular activities, and provide ample support services, potentially hindering holistic student development [13]. Budgetary constraints may also inadvertently marginalize students with disabilities, mental health concerns, or those from underprivileged backgrounds. However, strategic resource management and partnerships with external organizations can offer potential solutions by providing additional funding, expertise, and resources [14].

The existing research on student services has notable gaps, including overlooking the unique needs of smaller, rural, and marginalized institutions [2], limited understanding of technology's role in equitable access [11], a lack of qualitative insights into student experiences regarding accessibility and cultural sensitivity [3], and a dearth of longitudinal studies examining long-term impacts on retention and career readiness [7]. To address these gaps, local studies like Madrigal and Genovate's [15] research at the University of Negros Occidental Recoletos Graduate School provide valuable context-specific insights into student experiences and the effectiveness of services within specific institutional settings.

Thus, this paper examined the college student satisfaction with selected school services at a Catholic institution in Southern Negros Occidental during 2023-2024 in the light of product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence relative to sex, academic

program, year level, or family income. Likewise, it also investigated the significant difference in their satisfaction when grouped according to the demographics. The findings of the study served as baseline data for a proposed marketing plan for the school.

2.0 Literature Review

Student satisfaction in higher education is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors, including teaching quality, infrastructure, and academic support [9,7,16]. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of online learning experiences and faculty engagement for international student satisfaction, with studies like Zhang et al. [17] emphasizing the need for adaptable and engaging virtual environments to maintain student satisfaction during crises. Additionally, student loyalty, a key outcome of satisfaction, is influenced by factors like perceived value, emotional connection to the institution, and social influence [16].

Resource limitations in many Latin American and African Catholic universities pose challenges to providing adequate student support services, affecting student satisfaction [18]. These limitations can hinder the development of comprehensive academic advising, career counseling, and mental health resources crucial for student well-being and success. Moreover, the growing role of technology in education presents both opportunities and challenges. While online learning platforms can enhance access and flexibility [19], addressing digital divides and ensuring equitable access to technology for all students remains a pressing concern [20,21]. Striking a balance between technological integration and providing offline resources is essential for fostering student satisfaction in these contexts.

Research on Catholic HEIs in Asia reveals a diverse landscape where national contexts and student priorities significantly influence satisfaction levels [22]. In countries like Japan, where academic rigor and career preparation are highly valued, student satisfaction may be more closely tied to academic outcomes and career placement services [7]. Conversely, in countries like Thailand and Malaysia, where cultural values and social connections are emphasized, student satisfaction might be influenced by the sense of community and belonging fostered within the institution [23]. Recognizing these nuanced differences is crucial for tailoring services to meet the unique needs and expectations of students in each context.

The marketing mix (7Ps) framework is increasingly relevant in understanding student satisfaction within Catholic higher education. A strong "product," encompassing not only academic rigor but also the integration of Catholic values, ethical principles, and social justice initiatives, is crucial for attracting and retaining students who seek a values-based education [24]. Effective promotion through various channels, including social media, websites, and campus events, can help communicate this unique value proposition to prospective students [19]. Moreover, a welcoming and inclusive "place," both physical and virtual, that fosters a sense of community and belonging, can significantly enhance the student experience [24].

Research suggests that student demographics like sex, academic program, year level, and family income can influence satisfaction levels. While some studies find no significant sex/gender differences in overall satisfaction [25], others suggest nuanced variations in priorities, with women potentially placing more emphasis on campus safety and support services [26]. Additionally, academic program choices can shape students' expectations and experiences, influencing their satisfaction with specific services and resources [24]. Year level may also play a role, as students' needs and priorities evolve throughout their academic journey [27,28,29]. Moreover, family income can impact student satisfaction by influencing access to resources and support outside of the institution [30].

3.0 Framework of the Study

The study is grounded in the Expectancy-Value Theory, which suggests that students' satisfaction with school services is shaped by their individual expectations and the perceived value they assign to these services. These expectations and values can be influenced by demographic factors such as sex, academic program, year level, and family income. For instance, students from different academic disciplines may prioritize different services based on their field of study, while family income can affect the perceived value of school-provided support.

The study also draws on the Social Exchange Theory, which posits that students evaluate the quality and relevance of school services based on a cost-benefit analysis. In this context, students' satisfaction is contingent on the extent to which the services meet their specific needs and expectations. This can vary based on factors like sex, academic program, and personal values. For instance, female students might prioritize supportive and inclusive environments, while students in science programs might value access to advanced research facilities.

Within the Catholic higher education institution context, the Social Exchange Theory extends to include the values and principles of the Catholic faith. Students may seek services that foster spiritual growth and community engagement, like campus ministry programs and service-learning opportunities. Their satisfaction is influenced by the degree to which these services align with their spiritual needs and expectations. By understanding the interplay of individual needs, expectations, and the perceived value of school services, Catholic institutions can tailor their offerings to enhance the overall satisfaction and well-being of their diverse student body.

4.0 Methods

The study utilized the quantitative research design specifically the descriptive-comparative approach. The descriptive approach measured the level of satisfaction of students on selected school services in a Catholic higher educational institution in Southern Negros Occidental, Philippines in the light of the 7Ps marketing framework namely: product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. The comparative approach investigated the significant differences in their level of satisfaction when grouped according to the demographics. Meanwhile, the respondents of the study were the 328 college students.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	n	%
Sex		
Male	72	22.0
Female	256	78.0
Year Level		
First Year	191	58.2
Second year	65	19.8
Third Year	44	13.4
Fourth Year	28	8.5
Academic Program		
COED	169	51.5
CAS	27	8.2
CBA	132	40.2
Income		
Lower (Php 10,000 and below)	239	72.9
Higher (Over Php 10,000)	89	27.1
Whole	328	100.0

The study utilized a modified questionnaire according to the 7Ps marketing framework. This instrument was subjected to validation and reliability testing. Data collection involved obtaining permission from the school President, selecting participants from the official enrollment list, and utilizing trained enumerators. In data analysis, mean, standard deviation, Mann Whitney U Test, and Kruskal Wallis were employed to analyze both the descriptive and inferential problems. Lastly, the researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB).

5.0 Results and Discussion

Level of Satisfaction of Students with Selected School Services

The respondents generally expressed high satisfaction ($M=3.34$, $SD=0.40$) with the school services, aligning with previous research highlighting the multifaceted nature of student satisfaction in Catholic higher education institutions [31]. This overall positive perception suggests that the institution effectively meets student expectations and delivers a positive educational experience, encompassing both academic and non-academic aspects [32]. However, the lower satisfaction scores for price ($M=3.20$, $SD=0.54$) and physical evidence ($M=3.22$, $SD=0.50$) indicate areas for improvement. This discrepancy aligns with Genovate and Madrigal's [15] findings, where product aspects were highly valued by stakeholders, while price considerations ranked lower. The institution should prioritize addressing concerns related to affordability and the tangible aspects of the school environment to enhance the overall student experience.

Regarding the product ($M=3.42$, $SD=0.44$), the consistently high satisfaction across all demographics underscores the effectiveness of the institution's diverse product offerings, ranging from counseling and health services to spiritual development programs and extracurricular activities. This comprehensive approach aligns with research emphasizing the importance of both academic and non-academic factors in shaping student experiences [33]. The institution's success in this area likely contributes to its positive reputation and growth, as research suggests a positive correlation between student satisfaction and institutional performance [34]. Moreover, the high satisfaction with extracurricular activities and disability-related support services indicates the institution's commitment to fostering personal development and global competence, as highlighted by Herdlein and Zurner [35].

While the overall satisfaction with price ($M=3.20$, $SD=0.54$) suggests that the institution's pricing strategies are generally well-received, variations among different groups warrant further attention. Male students, those in their final year, and those from higher-income households reported higher satisfaction, indicating a perception of fairness and value for money, potentially due to transparent fee structures and financial aid options [36]. However, the moderate satisfaction among female students, those in earlier years, and those from lower-income households may be influenced by socioeconomic factors and financial constraints [37]. The institution could explore value-based pricing approaches [38] and consider socioeconomic disparities in financial coping strategies to better align with student expectations and enhance satisfaction across all demographics.

Table 2. *Level of satisfaction of college students with selected school services as a whole*

Services	M	SD	Int
Product	3.42	0.44	Highly satisfied
Price	3.20	0.54	Satisfied
Place	3.45	0.47	Highly satisfied
Promotion	3.42	0.45	Highly satisfied
People	3.40	0.47	Highly satisfied
Process	3.39	0.50	Highly satisfied
Physical evidence	3.22	0.50	Satisfied
Whole	3.34	0.40	Highly satisfied

Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Sex

While no significant gender-based differences were found in satisfaction with place (M = 3.45, SD = 0.47) and process (M = 3.39, SD = 0.50), male students reported significantly higher satisfaction than female students with product (M = 3.42, SD = 0.44), price (M=3.20, SD=0.54), promotion (M = 3.42, SD = 0.45), people (M = 3.40, SD = 0.47), and physical evidence (M = 3.22, SD = 0.50). This finding aligns with previous research showing gender-based disparities in service satisfaction, where males tend to report higher satisfaction and females prioritize and have heightened expectations [39,40]. These differences may stem from varying perceptions of service quality and recovery preferences [41,42]. To address this, school administrators should tailor service delivery strategies to better cater to diverse student needs and preferences, potentially through diversified offerings, revised pricing and promotion, diversity training for staff, and a more inclusive physical environment.

Table 3. *Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Sex*

Variable	U	z	p
Product	7612.000*	-2.267	0.023
Price	7267.000*	-2.754	0.006
Place	8254.500	-1.369	0.171
Promotion	7679.500*	-2.180	0.029
People	7649.500*	-2.211	0.027
Process	8457.500	-1.079	0.281
Physical Evidence	7497.500*	-2.420	0.016

Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Income

There were significant differences in the level of satisfaction of the college students with school services in terms of product (U=7696.500, p=0.000), price (U=7255.000, p=0.000), place (U=7777.000, p=0.000), promotion (U=7789.000, p=0.000), people (U=7235.000, p=0.000), process (U=7438.500, p=0.000), physical evidence (U=8370.000, p=0.003) as assessed by the college students when grouped according to income. The students from higher income rated significantly higher than those from lower income in the given areas. This income-based disparity in satisfaction aligns with previous research showing higher-income students reporting greater satisfaction across various school service aspects [42,43,44]. This may be

attributed to factors such as pre-existing expectations, resource access, and institutional practices favoring higher-income backgrounds [45].

Table 4. *Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Income*

Variable	U	z	p
Product	7696.500*	-3.866	0.000
Price	7255.000*	-4.447	0.000
Place	7777.000*	-3.789	0.000
Promotion	7789.000*	-3.760	0.000
People	7235.000*	-4.468	0.000
Process	7438.500*	-4.233	0.000
Physical Evidence	8370.000*	-2.970	0.003

Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Year Level

No significant year-level differences were found in satisfaction with product ($\chi^2(3)=6.053$, $p=0.109$), price ($\chi^2(3)=4.853$, $p=0.183$), place ($\chi^2(3)=1.240$, $p=0.743$), promotion ($\chi^2(3)=0.793$, $p=0.851$), and physical evidence ($\chi^2(3)=6.556$, $p=0.087$). However, significant differences were noted in people ($\chi^2(3)=9.094$, $p=0.028$) and process ($\chi^2(3)=8.718$, $p=0.033$). Fourth-year students ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.41$) reported higher satisfaction with people than other years, while second-year students ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.56$) expressed lower satisfaction with process. These findings align with research on the "sophomore slump" [46,47] and the increased engagement of fourth-year students [48], suggesting the need for targeted interventions to improve the second-year experience and maintain high satisfaction among fourth-year students.

Table 5. *Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Year Level*

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Product	6.053	3	0.109
Price	4.853	3	0.183
Place	1.240	3	0.743
Promotion	0.793	3	0.851
People	9.094*	3	0.028
Process	8.718*	3	0.033
Physical Evidence	6.556	3	0.087

Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Academic Program

While no significant differences in satisfaction with place ($\chi^2(3)=5.492$, $p=0.064$) were found among academic programs, significant differences were noted in product ($\chi^2(3)=12.627$, $p=0.002$), price ($\chi^2(3)=17.445$, $p=0.000$), promotion ($\chi^2(3)=9.174$, $p=0.010$), people ($\chi^2(3)=12.758$, $p=0.002$), process ($\chi^2(3)=8.217$, $p=0.016$), and physical evidence ($\chi^2(3)=13.881$, $p=0.001$). Specifically, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) students consistently reported higher satisfaction than students in other programs. This may be attributed to factors such as superior academic offerings, faculty expertise, and tailored resources [49,50].

Table 6. *Difference in the Level of Satisfaction of College Students with Selected School Services according to Academic Program*

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Product	12.627*	2	0.002
Price	17.445*	2	0.000
Place	5.492	2	0.064
Promotion	9.174*	2	0.010
People	12.758*	2	0.002
Process	8.217*	2	0.016
Physical Evidence	13.881*	2	0.001

Note: *the difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$

The findings validate Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) in understanding student satisfaction within a Catholic school. High overall satisfaction indicates students perceive the school as meeting their expectations and delivering value (EVT), with the benefits outweighing the costs (SET). However, lower satisfaction with price and physical evidence suggests a perceived imbalance between costs and benefits in these areas, aligning with SET's focus on cost-benefit calculations. Differences in satisfaction across demographic groups further support both theories, highlighting the influence of individual expectations, values, and circumstances on student satisfaction.

6.0. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the complex landscape of student satisfaction of services within educational settings. While students generally express high satisfaction with school services, significant differences emerge based on demographic factors such as gender, income, year level, and academic program. This emphasizes the importance of customizing service delivery to meet the unique needs and expectations of diverse student groups. Beyond overall satisfaction, the research highlights the impact of pricing and physical infrastructure on student perception and experience. It also reveals variations in satisfaction levels across different academic programs, offering valuable insights for targeted improvements. These findings collectively underscore the need for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of student satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of recognizing individual differences and addressing specific concerns to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

7.0. Limitations of the Findings

While this study offers valuable insights, it's important to acknowledge its limitations. The findings are specific to the context of a single educational institution and may not be generalizable to other settings. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases and may not fully capture the nuances of student experiences. Furthermore, the research focuses on satisfaction levels and does not delve into the underlying reasons behind those levels, potentially limiting the depth of understanding.

8.0. Practical Value of the Paper

The findings offer actionable insights for the Catholic school to enhance the student experience. Administrators and faculty can prioritize improvements in areas like price and physical evidence, drawing inspiration from the successful curriculum and teaching methods in the College of Arts and Sciences. Additionally, tailored support services can be implemented for specific student groups, such as female students, those from lower-income families, and

second-year students who reported lower satisfaction in certain aspects. For the marketing team, the study highlights the school's strengths in product, place, promotion, people, and process, which can be leveraged in targeted marketing campaigns. The feedback on price and physical evidence can also be addressed proactively in communication strategies. For instance, highlighting the school's commitment to quality education and showcasing upcoming facility upgrades can alleviate concerns and attract prospective students. The study's results provide valuable evidence for stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and strategic planning. By sharing these findings, the school demonstrates transparency and accountability, fostering trust and collaboration with stakeholders. This data-driven approach can lead to a shared vision for the school's future and continued improvement in student satisfaction.

9.0. Directions for Future Research

Future research can delve deeper into the nuances of student satisfaction in Catholic schools. Qualitative studies, such as interviews and focus groups, can uncover the reasons behind satisfaction levels, while longitudinal studies can track how satisfaction evolves over time. Comparative analyses with other school types can highlight the unique factors influencing satisfaction in Catholic schools. Expanding the scope to include other stakeholders like parents, alumni, and faculty can offer a more holistic view. Additionally, exploring the impact of satisfaction on academic achievement, retention, and post-graduation success can demonstrate the long-term value of investing in student satisfaction initiatives. This research can guide Catholic schools in developing targeted strategies to enhance the overall educational experience and ensure student success.

10.0. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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